

Ep #140: The New Rules of Not Perfect



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Natalie Brown

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This is *Weight Loss Success* with Natalie Brown, episode 140.

Welcome to *Weight Loss Success* with Natalie Brown. If you're a successful woman who is ready to stop struggling with your weight, you're in the right place. You'll learn everything you need to know to lose weight for the last time in bitesize pieces. Here's your host, Master Certified Coach Natalie Brown.

Hey, everybody, I recently got a new planner journal thingy that I am loving from Silk + Sonder. That's the brand. I'm not sponsored by them or anything, it's just letting you know so you can go find it yourselves. It combines daily planning with goals, and self-improvement, and habit tracking, and coloring, adult coloring and it's so fun. It's beautifully designed. It has a wide variety of pages that encourage thoughtfulness, and self-reflection.

And it could also, if you were so inclined, trigger the tendency toward perfection and eventual quitting and I can definitely be so unkind. I remember as an elementary aged kid before we had computers to do our assignments on, we had to write reports out with our hands, and do our assignments on paper in cursive might I add. I would write and erase, and rewrite, and throw away, and start over 10 times. If my spacing was off or if I wrote a letter weird and I couldn't correct it, if I spelled something wrong I would scrap it and start over, and go until it was perfect.

Before texting we wrote notes to each other in class. And I would almost always do a first draft so I could redo it and make it perfect. I would never hand in or give to a friend, a note or assignment with something crossed, or scribbled out, or misspelt, heaven forbid. Some of you might say, "A first draft is just good sound practice of excellence." And I agree in college essays, and papers, or your memoir, certainly. On your third grade paper about the founding fathers not so much, but that's just how I was wired.

It was and real issue with my piano teacher. I would start the song over, and over, and over again during my lessons until I played it with no mistakes. One of the biggest things I had to work on was allowing a wrong

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note, a mistake to happen as I played and to just keep going. It was so uncomfortable to my brain. I remember feeling such a strong urge to stop and start over. Learning to accept and go with the flow of imperfection was something I had to work really hard on and I continue to because I am not, and will not, and cannot be perfect to add anything.

What it created for me mostly as a child was me not trying certain things or new things lest I made a mistake and couldn't do it perfectly. This is often what happens with perfectionism. It's not really that a perfectionist does everything perfectly. It's that we only do the very few things we know we can do perfectly or to a very high standard. And we run ourselves ragged trying to do so and we don't attempt anything else. Or we quit straightaway when we're not perfect at it.

I have worked really hard as an adult to learn to embrace my imperfection, my humanness and do things even if I can't do them perfectly. Trying new things and be bad or mediocre at them, work on them to improve, not to be perfect. Allow myself to make mistakes and keep going. So, as I opened up this journal for the first time I felt a little bit of that tendency. It's so pretty and there are a number of pages that have some sort of daily check-in, one for habits you want to a keep track of, one for tracking sleep. You can track meals and water intake, all sorts of things.

Well, if there is a chart that is supposed to be filled in every day and I miss a day, it just hurts my perfectionist heart and makes me want to throw the whole thing away and start over next month. Or if there's a list of things I'm supposed to check off every day and I don't do all of them so there are blank spots in the perfect grid of otherwise filled in squares. My perfectionist brain just wants to either lie and say, "I actually did do it", so I can fill it in and make it look right, or throw it away and start over again next month.

So, in order to actually allow myself to be human and also participate in this fun new journal I decided on some new rules for myself with this journal situation that I think we can extrapolate to the weight loss journey you are all on. New rule number one, let there be blanks. There will be days I don't

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open the journal and there will be a blank where that date did not get checked off. There will be days I do six out of seven or I do one out of seven and there will be a blank or several that don't get filled in.

Big glaring blank spaces that say I didn't do that thing I said I was going to do. But there will also be many days that I do open the journal and check off boxes, days that are not blank. That's what I want to focus my energy on noticing, all that I do, not only the things that I don't. At the end of a month, I will have accomplished things, and learned things, and experienced things I never would have experienced if I had quit and thrown it away at the first sign of a blank space.

You will have days where you don't focus on your hunger and satiety, days where you don't plan a thing, days where you eat three desserts when you only wanted to eat one, days where the majority of your day is on plan. And then the last meal of the day gets thrown out and you choose to drive-thru for a burger and fries instead. But does days will just be blank spaces in a sea of trying, and learning, and checking the boxes. That one meal off plan does not negate the other two or discount the fact that you are making progress toward your goals.

Throwing away the day or beating yourself up about the blanks, that gets you nowhere and it's not necessary. Let there be blanks and keep going. Of course, with a pretty new journal, I had to get pretty new pastel pens to match. And the perfectionist in me wanted to use them in rainbow order, and fill in all of the charts in daily planning pages in even sections of coordinating colors perfectly of course.

And of course, I didn't want anything to be scribbled, or crossed out, or changed despite the fact that they are pens, not pencils. And when that didn't happen yeah, you guessed it, I wanted to throw it away and start over next month. So, rule number two is, let it be messy. Listen, I know how satisfying it is to watch someone on Instagram, meal prep 20 identical meals for the week, stack them beautifully in their fridge, just like it's very satisfying to see one of my journal pages filled out in a lovely and neat rainbow of colors but that is not the only way this has to look.

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You don't have to meal prep, or make all your meals at home from scratch, or eat only organic in order to lose weight and take care of yourself. I can use all green or random smatterings of green, purple and blue and that still gets the job done. Your life, your human life is unpredictable, and tangly, and messy. It's also beautiful and uniquely yours. And it's happening either way. So, you can fight the mess and be mad about the lack of utter and complete Instagram perfection. Or you can embrace the mess and find ways to move through it and work with it.

Even McDonald's has salad, okay. It may not be the perfectly macro balance organic kale recipe with the homemade keto friendly dressing that you saw on Instagram this morning and plan to make tonight. But it will get the job done when plans change, and you're tired, and the alternative is you eating ice-cream out of the container for dinner. One of the pages of my journal is a circular habit tracker.

It looks like a beautiful fancy donut with every day of the month going around the circle each represented by a column of six boxes. The idea is to choose six things you want to check off daily and do those same things for a month. So, I thought about it and I picked six small habits I wanted to focus on. I kept them tiny and reasonable so they would be doable. And about 10 days in there was one of them I hadn't done even one time. The other five things I had done most days. But there was that one ribbon of blanks running through it.

So, I got curious, why was I not doing that one thing? What was standing in the way? Did I really want to do that one thing or was this a thing on the list I felt like I should want to do because other people say it's a good idea? So, I played around with different versions of it, with eliminating it altogether and replacing it with something else. A series of experiments to see what worked and what didn't. Another thing I noticed about halfway through the month was that there were a couple of things I was doing anyway without having to think about it.

I didn't really need to make an extra effort to remind myself to do it. So even though those were easy boxes to check every day it wasn't really the

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challenge I wanted to provide for myself. So, I replaced them with a couple of things I wanted to work on, things that I needed those boxes to help remind me to do.

Rule number three, give yourself space to figure it out. Weight loss is ongoing problem solving. Just as your life is dynamic in its twists and turns, and ups and downs, so will be your weight loss journey. Your body's always changing, your life is never static and therefore so will be this process. The reality is not that you will find a one and done solution and never look back. Along the way you will observe patterns you want to change, find things that work for you and things that don't. Notice obstacles that come up.

If you're open to figuring it out rather than frustrated that it's not solved already, your brain will be able to see creative solutions and next steps to take rather than throwing it away and starting over next month. Let there be blanks and keep going anyway. Let it be messy, embrace it and keep going. Give yourself space to figure it out so that you can keep going. The only way we get there is if we keep heading toward it. Have a fantastic week, I'll see you soon.

Thanks for listening to this week's episode of *Weight Loss Success* with Natalie Brown. If you want to learn more about how to lose weight for the last time, come on over to itbeginswithathought.com. We'll see you here next week.